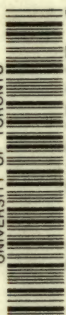


Rowntree, Joshua  
Applied Christianity and war

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# **APPLIED CHRISTIANITY AND WAR**

By  
**JOSHUA ROWNTREE.**

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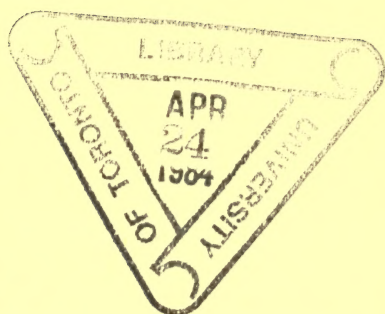
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THIRD EDITION.

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Readers of this pamphlet will appreciate a summary (authorised) of Norman Angell's striking peace volume, "The Great Illusion." The price of the summary is 1d. per copy, or 7d. per dozen, post free.



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## Applied Christianity and War.

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THE Founder of the Christian faith taught that "each tree is known by its own fruit. For of thorns men do not gather figs, nor of a bramble bush gather they grapes."\* In Him the ideal and the real, thought and conduct, were not divided. To Him the saying of the Chinese Sage remarkably applies: "His glory is to know that all things are one."† Christ's apostle, Paul of Tarsus—who brought the East and West nearer together than perhaps any man has done since—enumerated the fruits of the Christian spirit as these, "love, joy, peace, long-suffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, meekness, temperance," and by these he asked his comrades to walk. War cannot reconcile itself to such a company. By these fruits Christianity will still be judged, and by them those who accept it are called upon to walk.

In the well-known Bampton Lectures on "Dissent in its relation to the Church of England," Canon Curteis concludes a paragraph on the Society of Friends in these words, "It has all but put down slavery: it is on its way, I hope, to put down war." It is indeed to be hoped that the Friends will not lose their willingness to work for unpopular causes. It would be pitiful if they used any "cushion of advantage" won for them by brave men and women of old for the purpose of going to sleep. But if the putting down of war is a service for God and for humanity akin to the putting away of slavery, why should such a service be relegated to one of the least

\* Luke vi, 44.

† "The Simple Way" (Laotze), Edited by W. Gorn Old. p. 14.



of the tribes of Christendom? There appears to be no suggestion in the records of the New Testament that the task of superseding the old laws of revenge and hate by a new spirit of love and reasonableness should be limited to a mere handful of those who profess faith in Christ. On the contrary, the revelation of God in Christ as a God of love is itself Christianity,—is *the* message of glad tidings for all mankind.

The greatest want of Christendom everywhere seems to be the felt influence of the spirit of its Founder. As one looks round upon the world, one is compelled to say with Emerson, "I do not find the religious life of men at this moment very creditable to them; the fatal trait is the divorce between religion and morality." Christians, according to Bishop Westcott, should ever remember that they "are the inheritors of a life, and not of a system."\* Mr. Gladstone testified that "Christianity is Christ." To a greater than either of these, Paul of Tarsus, the very definition of a Christian was "a man in Christ." The first Being to give full application to the Lord's prayer, to the golden rule, to the new commandment, was surely Christ Himself. If there is any question of the interpretation of His sayings, His life would seem to be a sufficient answer. The truth He taught, and first He followed it Himself.

### ***Christianity a great Fraternity.***

The often seemingly conflicting claims between allegiance to our country and allegiance to the Kingdom of God are not new. Christ chose His lot in life amongst a people passionately patriotic. As a patriot He wept over the city that rejected Him. He welcomed to His inner circle of friends and witnesses one of the Zealots,—or "irreconcilables," in the language of our day. He went so far as to say, "salvation is

\* "The Gospel of the Resurrection," by Brooke Foss Westcott, D.D. 3rd. edition, p. xvi.

of the Jews." Yet how did he demean Himself in the presence of the two great hatreds that possessed the Jews, the fierce hate of the Roman Conqueror, and the bitter contempt of the despised Samaritans? A taxgatherer for the Romans was loathed as a traitor: Christ chose more than one as an intimate friend. Of a Roman Centurion He exclaimed, He "had not found so great faith, no, not in Israel." To the Samaritans He did more. He unfolded the fundamental truths of worship to a woman whom no Jew would willingly converse with. He accompanied her people back to their village, and abode with them, and taught them. The rulers of the Jews fastened cruelly upon this strange philanthropy. They said "Thou art a Samaritan, and hast a devil." Christ's answer was to select a Samaritan as the representative for all the ages of a true, kind-hearted neighbour. In so doing He revolutionised all the associations theretofore attaching to the name.

Only life can produce life. Systems may help to preserve, but are powerless to create. Amongst the Jews who drank in the Spirit of the new Teacher, a new life of promise and of potency sprang up. John was one of those who, justly enraged as all Orientals would be at the refusal of a night's shelter for their master in a Samaritan village, would fain have called down fire from heaven to destroy it; it was the method which naturally occurred to them of securing a "free course for the Gospel." The rebuke that came was severe, "ye know not what manner of spirit ye are of." It is to John, when he had himself learned that God is Love, that men owe the wondrous vision of the great multitude that no man can number, of every kindred and nation, and people, and tongue, standing before the Throne, all children of one Father. In the new dispensation, as another writer puts it, the different races and nationalities are no longer strangers and foreigners, but fellow-citizens, and of one family. "Christianity," the



historian Dr. Hatch tells us, "was, and grew, because it was a great fraternity. The name 'brother' . . . . vividly expressed a real fact." To-day we half wonder whether this is to be taken seriously— then, however, "the new Temple of God was the temple of the regenerate soul," and "the new Altar of God was the altar of human need." "They love all men," writes Diognetus, "and are persecuted by all. What the soul is in the body, this the Christians are in the world."

Relying on the power of the living spirit of Christ, Christianity made greater relative progress during the first three centuries than it ever has done since. Without trenching on uncertainties, three things may be asserted of its adherents at that time. Whilst many Roman soldiers became Christians, no Christian is known to have entered the army. It is certain that Christians suffered martyrdom rather than bear arms. Their protest against war was much more definite and complete than their protest against slavery. Even when the era of give-and-take arrangements between Church and State was entered upon by the Emperor Constantine, and spiritual life grew weak and faint, the fundamental truths of compassion and forgiveness were seldom left without some witnesses. The Greek Church forbade the sacrament for a period of three years to anyone who had taken human life. The maxim that "the shedding of blood is abhorrent to the Church," was over and over again honoured in the Roman Communion by truces of God and temporary arrests of cruel warfare.

Francis of Assisi, the "father of Italy," the "renewer of hope," who had, in the words of his latest biographer, "but one predecessor, one model, namely, Jesus of Nazareth," instituted, as is well known, a great lay order of those who, following their ordinary avocations, still wished to give a full allegiance to Christ. M. Paul Sabatier has discovered that the rules for this order, as originally drawn by S. Francis,



and in force for sixty years after, forbad the members at any time to bear arms. Well may M. Sabatier add, "It is a new S. Francis that we need, . . . going himself before us," saying afresh, "You enjoin peace in your salutations, have it in your hearts."

In England, John Wicklif and his followers denounced all war as strongly as any Peace Society of to-day. Sir Thomas More, Erasmus, and others at the time of the Reformation showed its manifold evils and inconsistencies. George Fox and his friends suffered imprisonment gladly, rather than bear arms. William Penn applied Christ's teaching to his new colony amongst the Indians so wisely and so well that for seventy years, as long as the Quaker influence remained in force, no life was lost, no treaty was broken between the Friends and the Indians. His words, alas! are a bitter reflection upon much of the so-called Christian treatment of native races to-day :

"We have agreed," said Penn, "that in all differences between us, Indians and Friendly, six of each shall end the matter. Don't abuse them, but let them have justice, and you win them. *The worst is that they are the worse for the Christians.*" In our own time the Dukhobors have made a brave and self-sacrificing stand for the "new commandment" of Christ, and even in South Africa some families might be heard of on the Biggarsberg Mountains, who had conscientiously objected to bearing arms, and had suffered in consequence.

### ***The Leaven of Peace.***

These events are comparable to the manumission of slaves all through the dark ages, at the instance of godly men of the Roman Church, culminating in the abolition of slavery from the civilised world in our own day. They prove that the leaven of the new dispensation was working quietly, though almost without observation. It asserted itself also in the gradual

supersession of violence in many directions by an ever-extending reign of law. Gladiatorial shows, tribal conflicts, blood feuds, broils of feudal lords, hostilities between provinces, have gradually receded into the dim past. Civil and religious liberty have been won for us by almost incredible sufferings. The barbarous and senseless "trial by Battel" was sanctioned by English law up to 1819, for Commoners. It was forbidden to Peers as beneath their dignity—the dignity of all British manhood happily is equally safeguarded now. The last excuse for violence is usually to be found in alleged infringements of honour. Even in this, Great Britain has purged itself from the sin and folly of the duel, and it seems already doomed on the Continent of Europe. Every successive step up has been opposed as an impossible demand upon human nature. Every advance secured has made further advances more possible. "When good men cease trying, the world sinks back like lead," and of late Christians generally have been timidly abstemious from serious efforts to put an end to the horrors of war. Yet the obligation rests heavily upon them. Humanity asks for it, and Christianity requires it. Mr. Lecky tells us in his "History of European Morals" that "the simple record of three short years of the active life of Jesus Christ has done more to regenerate and to soften mankind than all the disquisitions of philosophers, and all the exhortations of moralists." "I chose you and appointed you," said Christ to His followers, "that ye should go and bear fruit." Are the horrors of carnage fruits befitting His dispensation? Are those who name His name ever to remain as dwarfs in this matter? Are we to be satisfied with an arrested development, which is in truth a moral retrogression? In a sermon by Dr. Welldon, Dean of Manchester, at the Brighton Church Congress, the passage occurs;—

"One by one such customs as infanticide, the gladiatorial shows, the degradation of womanhood,

religious persecution, torture and slavery, have fled from the Christian world at the voice of the Spirit. But it seems to me that the Spirit is calling the Church of Christ in the new century to a yet higher and more arduous duty. It is to Christianise, not (only) individuals, but nations. It is to establish . . . a national and international morality. It is to inculcate such a spirit in the nations that they may treat one another like individuals—what shall I say, as gentlemen and as Christians.” Is this really too much to hope for? In 1861, the *Times* in a leading article said, “We must frankly own that we feel somewhat more free to act like men and Christians now than we could do five years ago. That ill-starred war, those half million of British, French, and Russian men left in the Crimea, those two hundred millions of money wasted in the worst of all ways, have discharged to the last iota all the debt of Christian Europe to Turkey. Never was so great an effort made for so worthless an object.”

### ***The Bible and the Sword.***

In grave perplexity one asks, “When are professedly Christian people exempt from the obligation to act as ‘men and as Christians,’ or ‘as gentlemen and as Christians,’ to others?” What sudden reversal of all the precepts of Christ, what effacement of His life and example is really permissible, and for how long? Some Malays run amuck as we know under the influence of ganga, or other form of madness. Are Christian nations at liberty to run amuck against other nations just for so long as statesmen or a popular majority may determine? It is certain that the early Christians did not so understand Christ; that Christ Himself did not provide for any periodical submerging of their allegiance to God beneath their allegiance to Cæsar. It is not too much to say that the readiness of good men to suspend Christian and humane relations between two peoples, and to sanction a recourse to murderous methods for



the settlement of disputes is a disgrace to civilisation, is a bitter satire upon Christendom. A Hindoo is reported to have told the Congress of Religions at Chicago—"You come with the Bible in the one hand and the conqueror's sword in the other. You degrade our men with your drink, you insult our women, and then you wonder that your religion does not make more progress. We can admire and revere your Christ, but we do not want your Christianity." What might not a Chinaman add to this indictment as he looks back upon the opium traffic, and the wars to which it gave rise? At a Parliamentary Peace Congress held at Rome the writer listened to a fiery Italian representative from a Southern constituency scouting the idea of looking to historic Churches for help in putting an end to war. They are opposed, he asserted, to all measures for raising the peoples; and then, pausing in his repudiation of organised Christianity, he added, as if thinking aloud, "I am a freethinker, but I confess I know not how you are to enlist our peasantry on your side, except in the name of the Ouvrier of Nazareth."

It is not, however, Hindoos or Chinese or Italians only who are repelled by the glaring contradictions between the religion we profess and the religion that we practise—the inconsistency is distressingly and increasingly felt by thousands of thoughtful minds at home. How can it be otherwise? "Religion," said a Canon of the Anglican Church very recently, "in these latter days has done little else as between nations but contribute to racial enmity, or geographical aloofness." "The outlook in Europe," said another Canon not long ago, "never presented so wholly unchristian a spectacle since the days of Constantine. The nations are watching one another like wild beasts in a jungle, and Christian Europe has armed itself in defiance of everything which Christ came to preach." Let us do justice to the wild beasts. Sir Samuel Baker, in summing up his hunting experiences, places them above

the level of mankind, in this particular—they do not, he says, deliberately war against their own species.

This then is the position,—Christ came down to prove that the love of God and of man is the richest of man's possessions. The world says, "Nothing of the kind, it is absurd,

'For loving all men clearly is deferred  
Till all men love each other.'

On which side are those who cling to the larger hope to range themselves? To the power that uplifts, or to the policy of despair? The *via media* is clearly unsatisfactory. If war "at its best is a hideous curse," as an excellent Prelate has recently told us, "a righteous war" is to most wayfaring men unthinkable. If ministers endorse General Sherman's dictum, that "war is hell," they must not expect unanimity in any resort to it.

### ***A Lesson from History.***

Take it how we may from any standpoint of discipleship to the great Teacher, a death-struggle such as that recently seen in South Africa is especially heartrending and humiliating. The two Christian races on whom the future of the country depends were cleft asunder, and the chasm between them widened and deepened as it filled with the bodies of the slain, whilst millions of fine natives looked on in wonder, not unmixed with contempt. The developments of war are ever accompanied by the negation of law, by inevitable processes of deterioration, by commercial corruption, and by moral bankruptcy. How can it be otherwise? The atmosphere it engenders of distrust and suspicion, to say nothing of vengeance and hate, is opposed to all ethics, is directly hostile to the spirit of the new dispensation. In visiting South Africa in 1901 we were glad to worship at one time with those whose nearest and dearest were in the British Army, or in hastily-equipped hospitals; at

another with those whose hearts were sore for kinsmen in Dutch commandos, or in far-off prisons. Each in public worship used Christ's own words, "Our Father." What must be the pity in the heart of the Father, for children who can find no better way for settling their differences than by destroying one another, and desolating each other's homes!

One Sunday morning in Cape Colony we went to chapel with an educated gentleman, a local preacher, who with his corps was in pursuit of the Boers. After the service the conversation turned into the usual channels, and the war spirit broke out acutely. A query as to the place of Christianity in it all was interposed, but the reply came quickly from our companion, "Oh, no, it is no use, there is no such thing as fighting on Christian principles,—it is impossible." No doubt this is so, and the question simply remains, which of the two must we part with? It is right to state that in my experience numbers of officers and soldiers from the front were more manly and generous in speaking of their foes than the mass of newspaper writers at home and in the Colony. One of the proudest lines in Tennyson's great poem on the Duke of Wellington runs: "Who never spoke against a foe." He was too great to sink into vituperation. But how few follow him in this. How seldom would war come if the foe was not traduced beforehand! In calling one day at the house of a well-to-do Dutch farmer in Cape Colony, and receiving refreshment from his daughter with the hospitality which is proverbial of, and the refinement which is too seldom, in our experience, accredited to the race, she was induced to tell us of her deportation with her sister to one of the Concentration Camps. In so doing she made a digression, in order to bring in an act of special courtesy by a British officer. An indignant Afrikaner present interrupted with the question, why need you bring that into an account of so much wrong?



The girl hesitated, and then said very quietly, "Oh, but when there is so much to make the heart ache, it is well to remember deeds of kindness!"

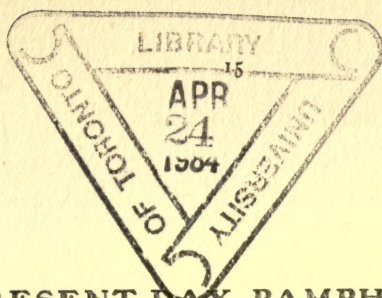
### *War's indelible stain.*

The late Emperor Frederick wrote to Prince Bismarck, "I have seen war, and know nothing so horrible as this human murdering." There is one thing sadder, and hardly less horrible. The punishments of war, which are unspeakably bitter, fall most heavily and extensively upon women and children who are wholly innocent of its cause. From this indelible stain there can be no release. It is inseparable from the system. Statesmen may pass by this "outrage on humanity" as a matter of necessity; but if Christian ideals are true, the mourning of countless thousands of broken lives and stricken hearts is noted and registered in heaven. Preachers may accept the advice to "stick to doctrine, because it hurts nobody," but the whole trend of the modern study of theology is surely this, that "our ultimate standard of life must be the character of God, as revealed to us in Christ." If so, this standard can only be upheld by the speaking of truth at all times, "but especially when the speaking of truth is dangerous." The weight and influence of organised Christianity seems to be in the balance, no less than the respective methods of peace and war. The line of least resistance is doubtless to be found in following the maxims and policies of the world,—for the pulpit to follow the press. On the other hand, if the Churches are still to have adequate reasons for their existence, they must witness for their Founder, and apply His example and precepts to the life and precepts of to-day. Without Him they can indeed do nothing. Without the living influence of His Spirit they cannot possibly be "power houses" for generating spiritual energy amongst men.

## ***A Time for Christians to Act.***

It is time for Christians to face this question more fearlessly. The hard-working people of Europe will not always follow statesmen who confess frankly that they are steering towards financial and social disaster. The awakening of the East is giving rise to new problems, for which force is certainly no remedy.

From whence can relief come? Before the time of Christ, men asked if a city of God was possible. "In Heaven," replied one of the greatest of the Greeks, "there is laid up a pattern of it, methinks, which he who desires may behold, and beholding, may set his house in order. But whether such an one exists, or ever will exist, is no matter; for he will live after the manner of that city, having nothing to do with any other." Those who give their allegiance to the kingdom of Christ, and recognise in him "a pattern" for the regeneration of the world, can hardly be content with less faith and courage and resolve than the Greek philosopher sets forth. Multitudes of men have proved that righteousness and peace are possible attributes of that kingdom. It is for our generation to do its part. The earnest application of the life and teachings and spirit of Christ to the grave and perplexing problems that confront us, cannot but clear the vision, improve the relationship, and sweeten the very existence of men. To many the endeavour to uplift human nature from a reliance on the atheism of brute force to the arbitrament of reason and the atmosphere of a great fraternity may seem to be a forlorn hope; but the facts of history warrant the conviction that no hope is ever forlorn which is led by the Prince of Peace.



## **PRESENT-DAY PAMPHLETS.**

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